(c) Afforestation of private lands was an approved activity under the World Bank assisted Andhra Pradesh Forestry Project. It has been observed in the audit that in Planning and Extension Forest Divisions Ongole and Nellore, deep ploughing was carried out with heavy duty tractor, excess planting was supplied and part cost of the planting stock was not recovered from the beneficiaries, which was at variance with the prescribed norms. The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department in their reply to these observations has justified the deviations on the basis of technical necessities.

MNCs in commercialization of water

5440. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the recent trend in commercialization of water is attracting the MNCs to step into this business;

(b) would the said venture be beneficial to India; if not, what steps Government propose to take to avoid commercilization of water; and

(c) whether Government would ensure free availability of drinking water to common man?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) According to the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) upto 100% is permitted in most activities in the manufacturing sector including manufacturing of mineral water. Similarly FDI upto 100% is also permitted in integrated water supply projects. Foreign Investment Promotion Board has accorded approval to M/s New Tirupur Area Development Corporation to undertake an integrated water supply project entailing the drawl, treatment and delivery of water from Cauvery River to Tirupur town and Municipality, FDI in such projects facilitates infusion of adequate capital, modern technology, efficient management paractices, which enhances the infrastructure facilities.

(c) According to the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission of the Department of Drinking Water Supply, 12,65,093 rural habitations have been fully covered and 1,40,208 have been partially covered with drinking water facilities.